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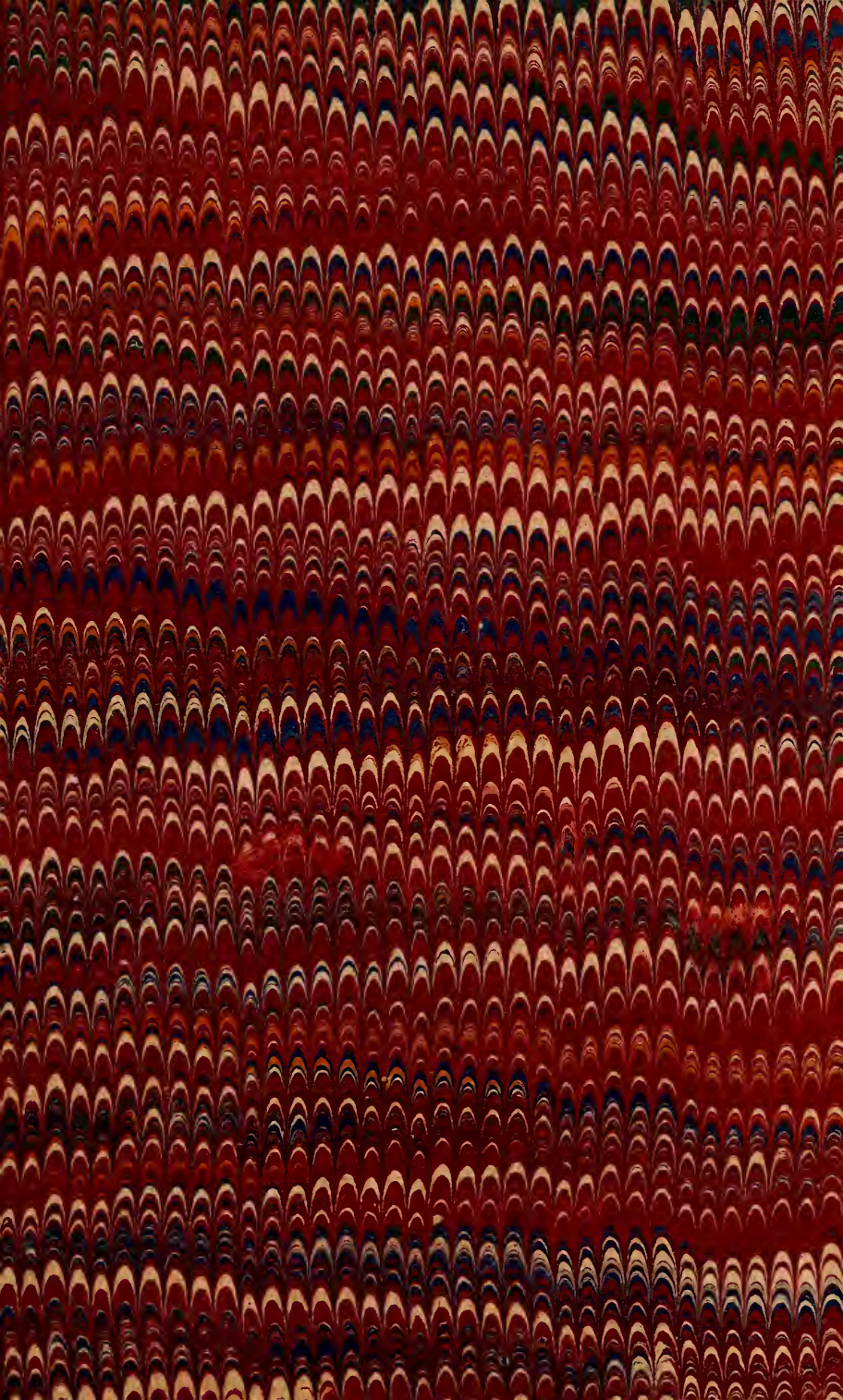
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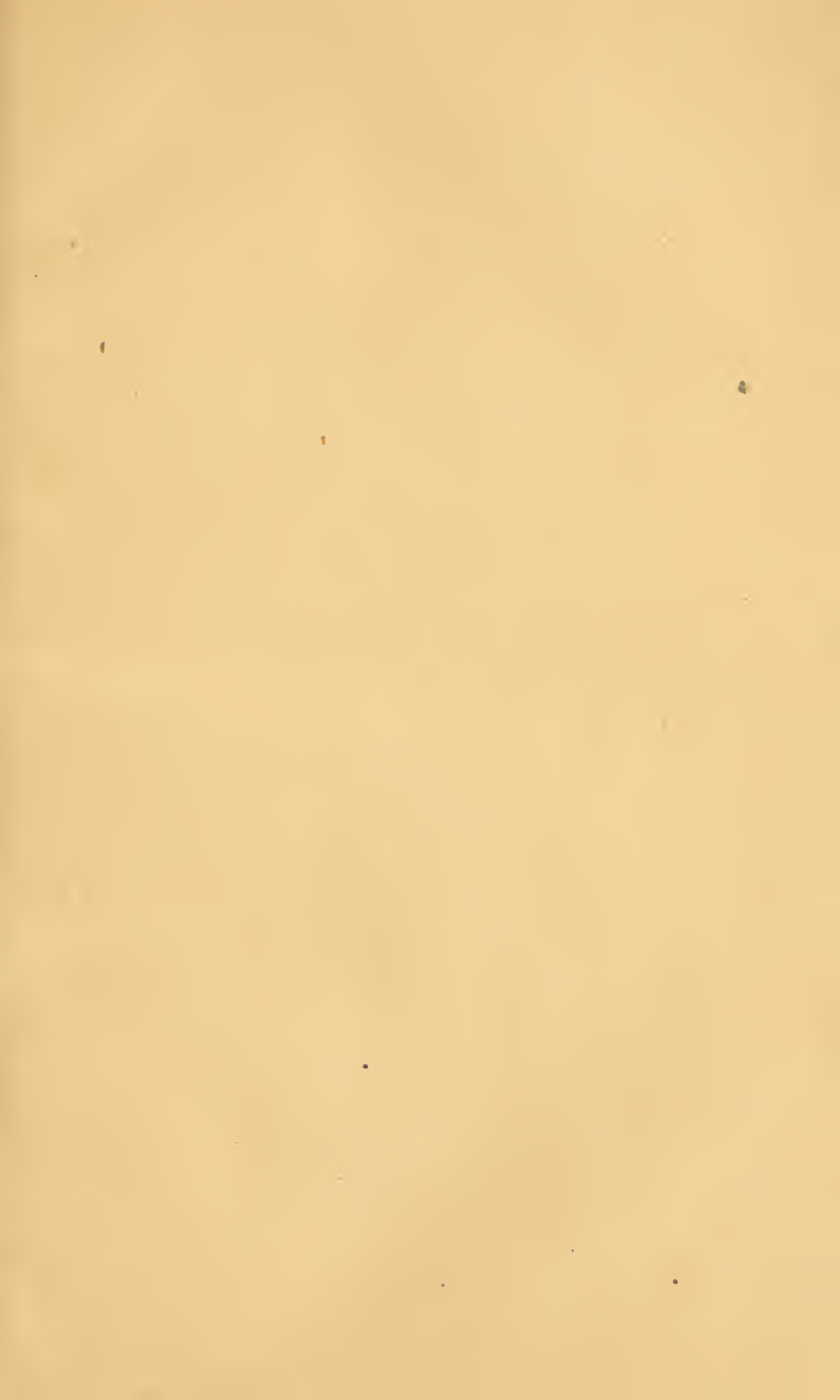
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Chap. E 310

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

LITTLETON, MASSACHUSETTS,

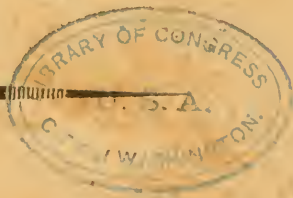
ON THE 30TH OF NOVEMBER, 1809;

BEING THE

DAY OF ANNUAL THANKSGIVING.

BY EDMUND FOSTER, A.M.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN LITTLETON.

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AMHERST, N. H.

PRINTED BY RICHARD BOYLSTON.

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MS. A. 10. New. 13/24

SERMON.

I HAVE but *little disposition*, and as little encouragement to speak on this *public occasion*, unless you are prepared to hear : For whenever it shall happen, that the speaker does not care ; and the hearer does not care ; it must verily all be a careless-piece of business.

PSALM 2d, 11th.

Rejoice with trembling.

IT is one excellence of the holy scriptures, that they instruct us how to balance and regulate all our passions and affections. They allow us to indulge ourselves in the exercise of one affection or passion rather than in another, according as our circumstances in life vary, and as our minds are differently affected by the providence of God. Is any among you afflicted, let him pray. Is any merrry, let him sing psalms. As the scenes of life are various and mixed, many duties towards God, our neighbour and ourselves, rise out of circumstances. And what is very proper and becoming us to do at one time, is very indecent for us to do at another. To every thing there is a season ; and a time for every purpose under the heaven. But in all situations and on all occasions, *temper and practice*

should be regulated by reason and religion. Joy and sorrow are to be tempered by consideration : Hope may be limited by fear, and fear alleviated by hope. These remarks are applicable to us in all the mixture of good and evil with which life is filled up. Mercies mingled with afflictions will excite a mixture of feelings in the human heart. The bitter and the sweet will be distinctly tasted in the cup of human joy. The mind is equally impressed with light and shade; and joy and sorrow, hope and fear generally rise within us in proportion as the scenes of life appear to brighten or to gather blackness.

These observations lead us into the very spirit of our text ; and teach us how to understand and apply these words—*rejoice with trembling*.

The doctrine which flows from the text, allows us to rejoice in all present good, and in hope of all that can be rationally expected in the future ; but it also cautions us against letting our joy in any present good run to excess, and to divert our thoughts from the precariousness of the possession, and of the evils and troubles which may overtake us amidst our highest enjoyments. It also admonishes us against rejoicing too much in the prospect of things future and unpossessed, because we may never attain to the actual possession of them. Such instructions from the Father of Mercies are wisely adapted to us in the present mutable state of things. They are applicable to individuals and societies, and even to whole republics and nations of men.

It is natural and lawful for men to begin their thanksgivings and rejoicings from some personal

considerations, and from thence to extend their affections to others connected with them by nature, interest and privileges. Our existence is both a blessing and a privilege, and in the contemplation of it, our thoughts are quickly led up to the great Author of our being and the giver of every good and perfect gift. Our capacities and advantages for improvement add much to the value of our existence. Had we ranked with those irrational creatures which are utterly insensible to all the beauties and perfections of God and his works, we should have differed but little from inanimate things; and have been deprived of the sublime and noble exercises of this day, and of those endless employments and rejoicings for which they prepare us.

But we have being in the image of the invisible God. Our powers of mind are active, rational and noble. The harmony and beauties of nature delight us; the wisdom of Divine Providence instructs us; and our contemplations of an infinite and eternal Spirit edifies us. The true value of our existence may be duly estimated from a view to its endless duration; a hopeful improvement of our rational, social and moral powers, and security of the happiness which results from them. But for the attainment of so noble an end, how much depends on a right use and application of our talents, and a virtuous improvement of the favours and blessings of Providence! If we rejoice in the possession of any present good, or in the prospect of their continuance and improvement, it must be with trembling least all

should be lost, and the whole delightful scene be changed into sorrow and misery by human folly and wickedness. By observing one day at the close of every year as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to Almighty God for his past and present mercies, we tread the round of custom and laudable example. Such a day is not by the special appointment of heaven. It in no other way becomes the ordinance of God, than by its being appointed by civil government, which the scriptures call the ordinance of God. In such an appointment the civil magistrate acts in character, and performs an indispensable duty both to his God and to his constituents. And christianity instructs its disciples to submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

On these occasions we usually take into consideration the being of God ; his government in the natural and moral world ; and his providence in the seasons and events before us. And that we may be duly thankful for his favors and improved by his corrections, it is proper to speak of his mercies and talk of all his judgments. The seasons of the year generally attract our first attention on a day of thanksgiving and praise. We are happy in knowing that these seasons are settled and established by a perpetual decree. While the earth endures, day and night, summer and winter, seed time and har-

vest shall know their place. Our joys would be greatly increased, if other circumstances and events inseparably connected with our prosperity and happiness, but depending much on the doings of men, were always directed with such wisdom and order, that they might be calculated upon with much the same safety and certainty. The goodness of the Lord is unchangeable, and his mercies endure forever. He that labours diligently, and prays in faith and confidence for his daily bread, shall always receive and enjoy it. Providence may sometimes disappoint our hopes by depriving us in part, or in the whole, of some particular fruit or grain, and yet be bountiful to us in other necessary and comfortable things. The grades of difference are many between plenty and famine, scarcity and want. No dearth, followed by distress and famine in which the people hungered and died, has ever yet been felt in this land. The present year has furnished us with sufficient plenty to satisfy ever sober and pious mind. O bless the Lord for he is good, and his mercy endureth forever ; and let no ingratitude or murmuring provoke him to withhold his favours in time to come : But trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt dwell in the land and shalt be fed.

The laws of the human frame are less stable and permanent, and more easily interrupted, than those by which the earth and the seasons are governed. The materials of which our bodies are composed ; the various degrees of weakness and strength visible in the constitution of them, and their being left more

to the care and direction of men, account for this difference. Their vigor may be increased, and their duration extended by temperance and exercise; and they are often recovered from their diseases by the healing art. Let these considerations guard the hearer against every species of luxury, intemperance and excess, lest he shorten a life, whose bounds are sufficiently *narrowed* by the *original Maker* and *final Disposer* of all things. Many a man has not lived out half the days he might have lived, had he used the world without abusing it. Shall men so pervert the means of support and comfort as to make them minister to their untimely death and destruction? If any rejoice in their revellings and excesses, let them rejoice with trembling: For their laughter shall soon be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. From epidemic diseases, which often proceed from air and climate, or some predisposition of the body to *them*, we have been mercifully spared. These causes are more immediately under the direction and influence of heaven. So far as Providence has advanced by itself and alone, her paths have been marked with wisdom and goodness, and have ministered to us health and comfort.

To Providence we are indebted also for the advantages and benefits of society. Such a state was designed for our happiness, and naturally tends to the promotion of it. No happiness on earth is so pure and satisfying as that which springs from virtuous friendship and charitable intercourse: For here the weaknesses and wants of individuals are

supplied by the strength and fulness of the whole : And the whole community becomes vigorous, prosperous and happy, when every member contributes to the general good. A state of solitude, in which none can be found with whom to communicate, is *gloomy, cheerless and unsatisfying*. Such a condition God would not impose upon his creatures. It is utterly excluded by the vast number and peculiar *features and character* of his works.

But when ambition and cupidity, interest and avarice, and all the malevolent passions are let loose to disturb the natural order of society, and turn things into their wrong channels, the change is awful and ruinous : And when man becomes the oppressor and persecutor ; the foe and destroyer of man, society is troublesome and afflictive in the same proportion as it would have been happy in a state of friendship and peace. A spark from these unhallowed passions, struck out in any part of this habitable world, will sometimes communicate itself to the remotest climes.

The combined influence of these *is that leaven* which leaveneth the whole lump. In this disturbed, alienated, and deranged situation, we have for years beheld, and still witness the inhabitants of this country and nation. Jealousy is substituted for confidence, and enmity for love. Our friendship, (if we have any) is more like a winter's frost which strips the earth of her beauties, and binds it in fetters of ice, than like that vernal influence which causes all nature to bud and blossom and yield all her rich fruits in plenty. Such a situation renders our joy

in a measure heartless ; and when called to rejoice in any thing present, it is with trembling for the future.

But the question is, whence are all these things ? How has it come to pass, that a people, once so well united in sentiment and affection ; and in their revolutionary struggle were successful in defending themselves against the sword of oppression and tyranny ; who by their union and exertion obtained their liberties ; organized themselves a body politic, and took a rank among the nations of the earth, should become so divided among themselves, that many of them are found contending and fighting with the American government, the work of their own hands ? The history of this political phenomenon, if known to some, is no doubt hid from many. I shall open and explain some of the principal causes of these dissensions, much in the order in which they appeared among us.

At the close of the revolution, the American colonies were mostly without any form of civil government. A people, whose liberties had been invaded and who had been successful in defending them, would naturally feel a high sense of their independence ; and duly appreciate the freedom they had purchased at so dear a price. As they were called to devise and adopt forms of civil government for themselves, under these feelings and impressions, they were jealous of their rights and privileges ; but these feelings, however, so far gave way to a sense of interest and duty, that our state governments were formed and established with but lit-

The opposition and difficulty. Having provided thus far for their security and happiness, they soon felt the want of a general government, in which a portion of the interests and powers of the whole should be lodged, for the purpose of connecting and combining the States together in a firmer bond of union. This gave rise to a Confederation of the States under a general Congress. In forming this confederation, the same jealousies operated which had been witnessed and felt in forming the several States government ; but increased by that vastly greater variety of interest which the plan embraced. The people every where guarded so cautiously against delegating too much power to this body of men, lest they might abuse it, that it was difficult to obtain enough to answer the purposes of such a government. The first Congress having only power to advise and recommend, and leaving it with the individual States either to adopt or reject their proposals at their pleasure ; the event was such as might have been expected. While some of them adopted these public measures, others rejected them ; by which our national affairs became weak and deranged. We were still in no situation to adopt any efficient measures for the great purposes of commerce, collecting a public revenue, and providing for the defence of the nation. A sense of our weaknesses and wants under this form of government, gave rise to the experiment of a federal constitution and government which should be permanent, and vested with sufficient powers for the accomplishment of these and other national purposes. A delegation

from the States was appointed for this purpose. And having devised the plan, they presented it to the consideration of the several states in convention ; which being ratified by two thirds of them, was to be binding upon the whole. The people were called again to adopt further means and regulations for their political defence and security. As the government was now to be permanent, and this, in all probability, was the last time they should ever have to act in such a capacity, the same jealousies and interests were awaked again. The work certainly demanded great wisdom, deliberation and caution. That it should progress and be accomplished without much debate and opposition, was more than could be expected.

A general government was desireable ; and the opposition in general was not so much against any constitution of the kind, as it was what should be its provisions, and what were the powers, (and for how long a time) they should delegate to the intended government. After several alterations and amendments had been adopted, and provision made for still further amendments, as an express condition of its going into effect, the constitution was established. If the debate on the several points in controversy could have ended here, as they probably ought to have done, it would have been happy for us. If after its adoption men were willing to support it, though it did not bear every feature they wished for, it was enough. But they had been heated and chafed in the controversy ; and those who advocated the constitution as it was, took to themselves the

name of federalists. Those who opposed it, though it were only as to some of its forms and features, were by them called anti-federalists. And hence arose the first party names that appeared among us after the revolution ; and they were repeated with more acrimony, and for a greater length of time, than justice or policy would allow. But the consequences of these animosities and dissensions were trivial compared with what appeared afterwards. The first President was chosen without a dissenting vote ; and the other branches of Congress with a good degree of unanimity. Things went peaceably and well till the question of funding the public debt came before the national government. None of the emissions of our paper money had been redeemed, and some thought it was as well to let all our other paper money and securities go the same way. That we should either redeem the whole of every description, or none at all. Others were of opinion that we had contracted a debt, and that justice demanded that we should pay it. But whom should we pay ? The soldier, whose patience was tired ; wearied in waiting for his pay ; and having lost his confidence in the government ; much in want of, and easily tempted with money, had parted with his evidence of governmental dues for a trifle. Enormous speculations had been made ; the paper was mostly in few hands, and had cost them but little. To pay the holder might be coming up to the letter, but not to the spirit of justice. The soldier who had borne all the fatigues and hardships of war, and dearly earned his money in the defence of his country,

would still be unpaid and defrauded. Would government pay both, first the holder of their certificates, and afterwards adjust the matter with the original possessor, by compensating him for his losses? Or would they divide the matter by paying the possessor what he gave, and the interest of his money that the speculator should lose nothing, and return the remainder to the original holder, that neither might be injured? But if justice and honor would allow of such a procedure in this extreme case, yet it was found difficult, if not impracticable. The debt was finally paid to the holders of public securities. By this means a few instantly became immensely rich at the expense and sufferings of others. The sudden and wide distinction thus made in the circumstances of individuals produced all the effects which might have been expected. The soldiers, finding that the nation had finally paid to the speculator what it had long withheld from them; and that they had served their country in a long and perilous war, without receiving the promised reward; became restless and clamorous. Applications were long and repeatedly made to the President and to Congress for compensation, but none could be obtained. Waving the question what justice and the best policy demanded in this case, the event was followed by much envy and jealousy, alienation and hatred among the citizens. The impression has never yet been done away, nor ever will be, till the present generation descends to the grave. The mere loss of their property, though grievous, was not the only evil felt and complained

of; they had rather their certificates had sunk after the example of the old paper money, than to see the demands thus transferred to others. They considered that those who had thus increased their interests at their expence, had also increased their influence, by which they were in danger of losing a great portion of that liberty which they had so dearly purchased; that they were threatened with a paper nobility, and monied aristocracy; that the avarice and ambition of men were never satisfied; that when they have all the money, they next want all the power; and while they are ready to imagine it belongs to them of right, they have one of the best and most effectual means of securing it. And truly those former transactions, viewed in connexion with the modern bank speculations, and the influence of these institutions and the dealers in them on society, go far to prove the correctness of this opinion.

By tracing the history of our country, it will be found that many dissensions and divisions among ourselves have arisen from exterior causes; from our commercial relations abroad, and from the influence which foreigners have obtained, and still hold among us. Our treaty formed with England by Mr. Jay gave rise to much warm debate and actual division among us; but these dissensions in a little time began to subside, and gave way to other events of much more dangerous consequence. France, in the reign of her monstrous Directory, depredated our commerce, and went even so far as to demand a tribute of our nation. This demand was instantly refused, and repelled with a united and in-

dignant spirit. She also refused our ambassadors, and treated them with indignity and insult, which threatened a serious rupture. Many were for instantly declaring a war of extermination against her, without any further attempt to adjust our differences with her ; but our President, in a dignified tone, but in the spirit of true policy, though against the advice of all his counsel, pursued the line of negotiation, to final success ; and thus happily saved this nation from a war in which we had nothing to gain, and much to hazard. For this he was denounced and forsaken by his former warmest friends ; and from that time and for that very act recovered much of the esteem and confidence of those who had been opposed to many parts of his administration.

Not far from this period, the French Minister, Genet, not meeting with desired success in his application to the President and to Congress, imprudently appealed from the government to the people. Such an appeal had a direct tendency to divide and distract the nation, and to lessen their confidence in their rulers, and was therefore frowned upon by every true American.

This was too favorable a period to be lost by Great-Britain ; who seized the opportunity and endeavored most artfully to detach as great a portion of the people as she could possibly to her interests. At this time the cockade appeared, under the pretence of being the mark to distinguish the friends from the enemies of our government and nation. If any individual choose to add any thing to his

own dress, either for use or ornament, he has free liberty to do it. But what right has any individual or number of persons unauthorised by their government, to assume such a badge in behalf of the whole nation, and to draw the bold and false inference that every one who will not imitate the example he has set up, is a suspicious person; an enemy to his own country; a friend to a foreign nation; and hereby attempt to bring upon him the jealousy, odium and scorn of their fellow-citizens? But had the persons who were thus easily drawn into this imprudent measure, known at that time, that this badge was introduced by William Cobbett, then a British emissary, and under British pay, and then editing a British paper in the United States, they would (many of them no doubt) have proceeded with more circumspection and caution in this matter. He was undoubtedly at the bottom of all the disturbance which this folly occasioned among us. For after his return to his own country, he wrote and published a pamphlet, which I have seen and read, in which he boasted of this among his other doings while among us. His nation rewarded him handsomely for his labours here: And one of the Lords declared in the House that he deserved a statue of gold for the services he had rendered them while in America.

We learn from this circumstance how much of fashion may be introduced into politics. However trivial such a thing may be in itself, yet when it is made the standard of worth on the one side, and of infamy on the other, and men are treated according-

ly, it then becomes hurtful. And the dissensions which sometimes arose, and the abuses and reproaches which followed, made impressions which have never been worn away. It might have been better to have gone bareheaded in all that time; than to have introduced this invidious distinction among citizens.

About this time also arose a faction, headed by Mr. Hamilton, and happy would it have been for America, if it had died with him; but it has ever since continued and is in existence at this day. President Adams, who was fettered and galled by them in all his administration, has, in his history, now publishing, exposed this faction to public view. Hamilton assumed a kind of dictatorship. Unsolicited he brought forward his plans of public measures, and told the government what they must do. The President met with such stubborn opposition, that he was obliged to dismiss his Secretary (one of this junto) in order to untrammel himself. The faction, with this Pickering at the head, is still in existence, and continue leaders in what is called the federal party among us. They were ostensibly the friends of President Adams, and of his administration; but Hamilton was their idol. And by a kind of management peculiar to themselves, they did more to prevent the re-election of Mr. Adams than any other men among us. They have obstinately opposed our own government in almost every thing for more than eight years, and have as long vindicated and supported Great-Britain in all her injuries and aggressions upon us. In some cases where she did not and could not support herself, she found ad-

vocates in America. When Britain attacked one of our national ships within our own waters ; murdered some of her crew and impressed others into her service, the President issued his proclamation excluding her armed ships from our waters, and denying them accustomed hospitalities, until reparation should be made. This measure was at the first very popular. The opposition papers in Boston commended it ; called it a temperate, dignified state paper.

The inhabitants of this town appeared to be unanimous on this subject. In an answer to a letter from the people of Norfolk on this affair, they pledged themselves with their fortunes for the support of the government in any measures they might see fit to adopt in support of its injured honor, and in defence of its invaded rights. Every thing assumed the appearance of returning harmony among us. We were now about to move hand in hand in support of our interests and rights. But no sooner was an embargo laid, which was not at first a party measure, though it was afterwards made one, these men immediately seized upon it, and made it an occasion to vilify and oppose their own government. They said it was unconstitutional and oppressive ; that the citizens were not bound to obey it, but had the same right to go with their ships and goods where they pleased, as though it had not been laid. They first broke the law, and then instead of censuring themselves as they ought to have done, they brought their transgressions to prove that the measure was weak and useless. An insurrection was on the point of breaking out. A dissolution of the

union of the states was threatened, and a northern confederacy talked of as the only thing that could save our country.

Great-Britain was again supported by these men in the very things for which they had just before condemned her. In every attempt to adjust the differences between her and ourselves, they took the side of our enemies. They said Britain was ready to make us honorable reparations, and had offered it; but our government would not accept them. These assertions were repeated with confidence after the arrangement with Mr. Erskine was made. When this arrangement was completed, they said, how stupid and foolish our government have been, and what sufferings they have brought upon the people without any cause. They have done at last what they ought to have done at first. The same terms have been offered us all along, and we might have had them a year ago. The falsity of these assertions soon appeared: for no sooner did Great-Britain know what their minister had done, than they disavowed the arrangement; declared they had given him no such orders, and that he had acted without authority. We have now an evidence from her own mouth and doings, that she never made us these proposals, as asserted by her partizans; and therefore the complaints against our government in this affair, are, or ought to be put at rest, to awake no more. Another minister has made his appearance; but it is only to insult us. Instead of offering us any reparation, our government are rather censured for believing Mr. Erskine, and are

told to their faces that they knew at the time they made the arrangement with him, that he was unauthorized by his government. How long shall we be insulted and abused by this nation? And what hopes have we of receiving indemnity at her hands? If we must appeal to our arms, and war must ensue, let us be timely prepared for the event, and meet it manfully. Officers, where are your swords? Soldiers, where are your arms? On you we rely, under Providence, for support and defence in this perilous day. Obey the calls of your government, and stand firm in support of the honors and interest of your country. Guard against that revolting and disorganizing spirit which has appeared among us. If indulged and cherished, it will prove the death of our independence, and the grave of our dearest rights and privileges.

The physical strength of every nation is in the governed, and every thing depends on uniting that strength, and directing it to a point. What is the head when severed from the members of the body? What is a general without his army? And what is the legislative body of a nation when deserted and even opposed by their constituents? If when they enact laws for the public good, and call for the sword in defence of our common interests, the people shall revoke their edicts, and refuse obedience, there is an end, not only to national honor, but to national existence. The cause is all your own. The government and the people so called, are not so properly two distinct things, as one and indivisible. Government is nothing else than a na-

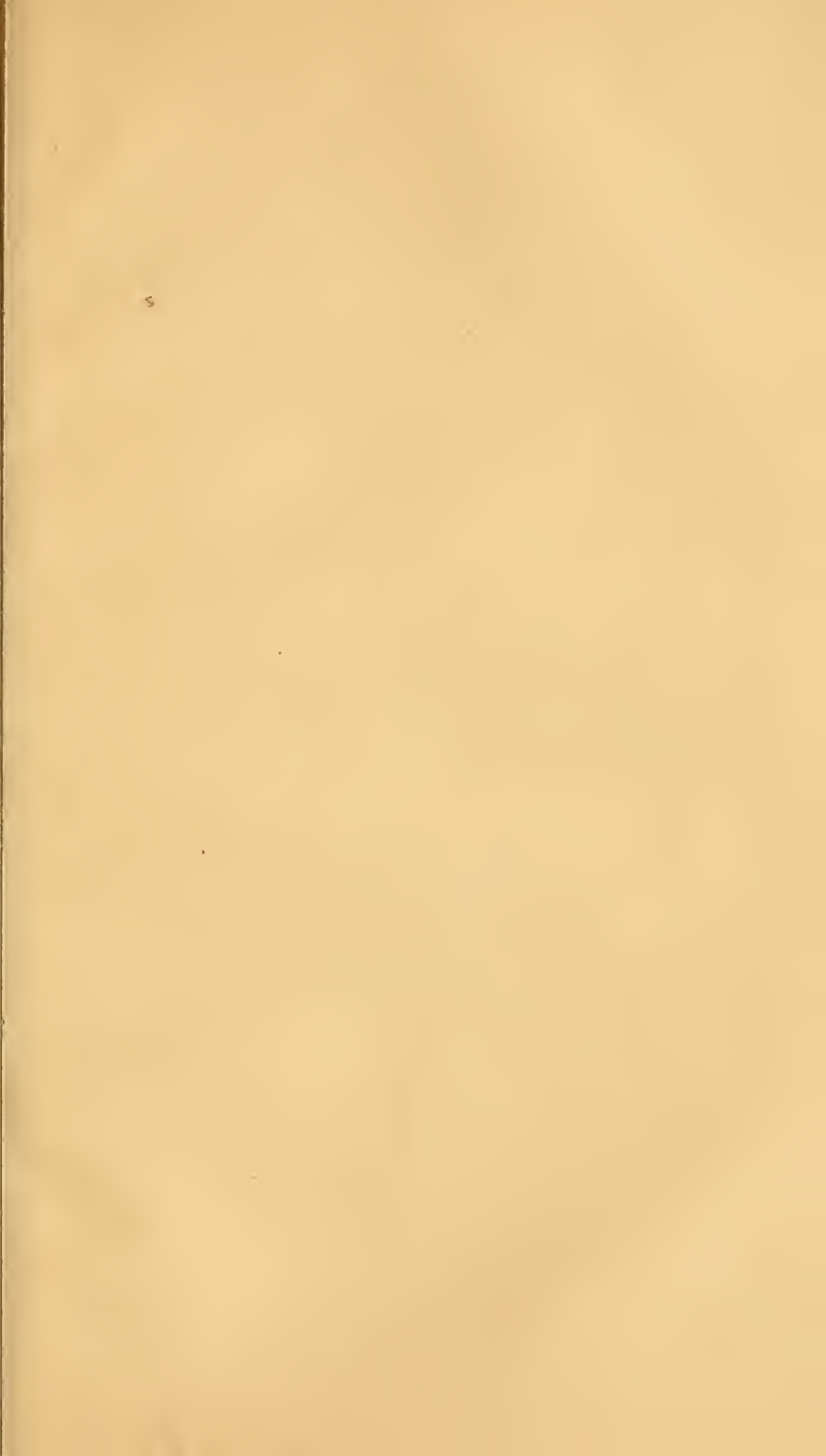
tion organized and fitted to support and defend itself. Government we must have. We must confide the direction and management of our public affairs to some men; and to whom can we confide them with more safety than to men of our own choice: to men taken from among ourselves, and who remain so connected with the people as to feel and partake with them of all the effects of their own doings? There are some who appear to be willing to support government so long as they can govern the government, and no longer. This would be subverting the natural order of things, and throwing the whole into confusion. It is like directing us to look for the head among the members. When men talk loudly of their individual rights, they ought to remember that others have rights as well as they. We ought ever to remember that the powers we have delegated to others, we do not retain: that it is as much the right and duty of our rulers to direct and govern our national concerns according to their best wisdom and ability, as it was ours to elect them into their respective offices.

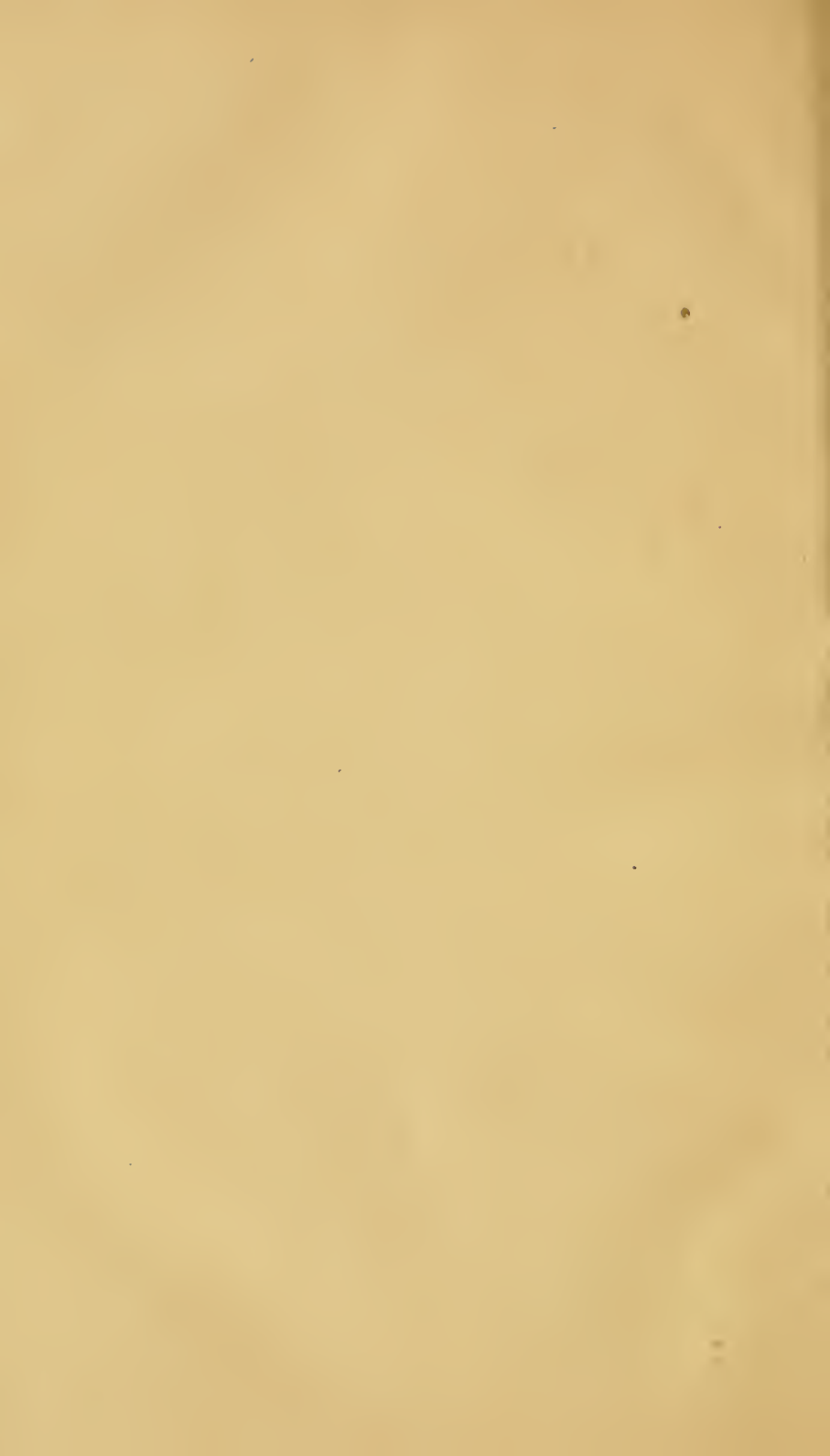
The peculiar state of our country and of its affairs invite these observations.

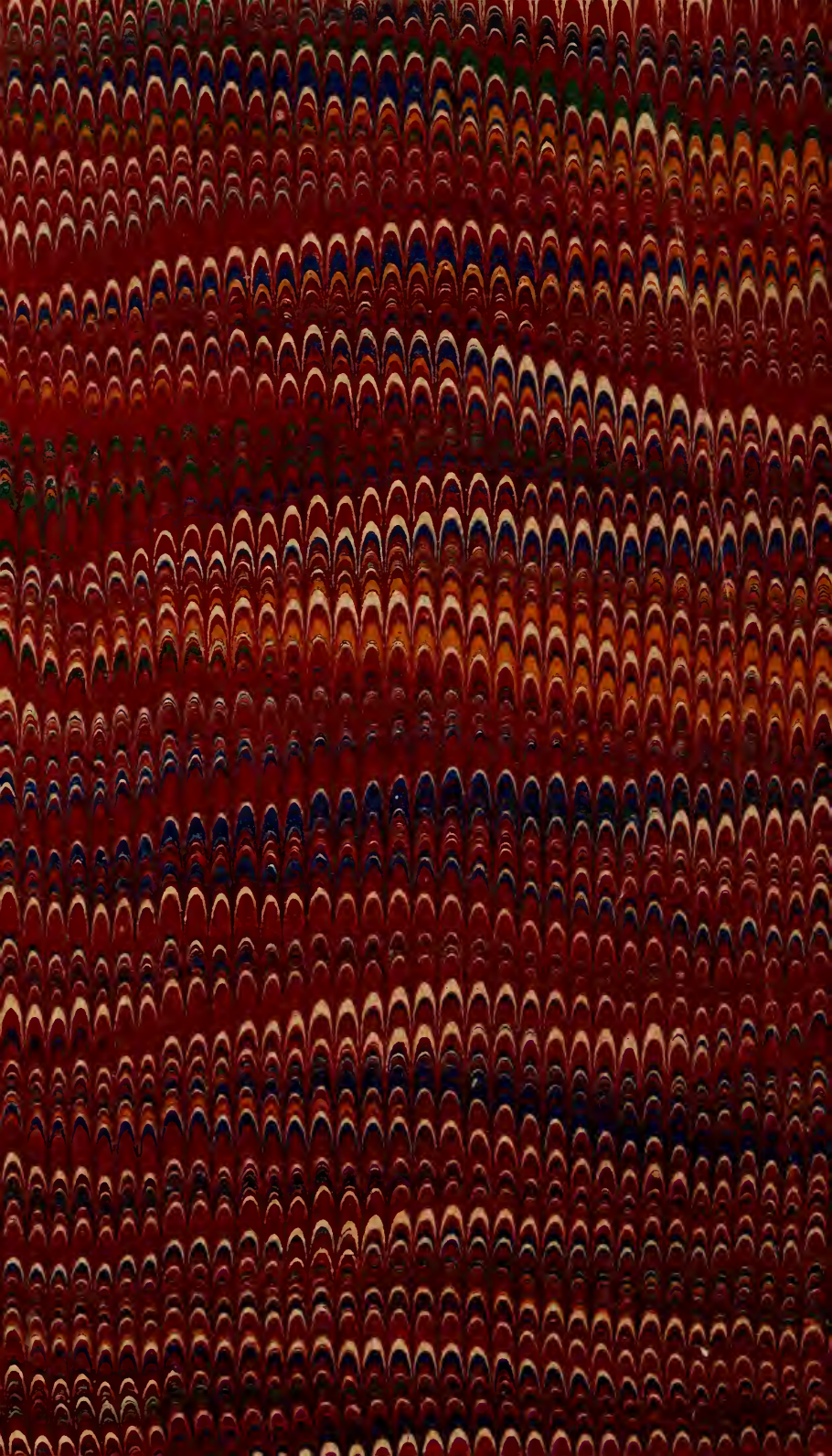
Let us obey the calls of duty, and still trust in that Providence which never overlooks nor forsakes the virtuous in their troubles. Though we may be afflicted, we shall not be forsaken; though cast down, we shall not be destroyed. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice—the Lord reigneth, let the people tremble.

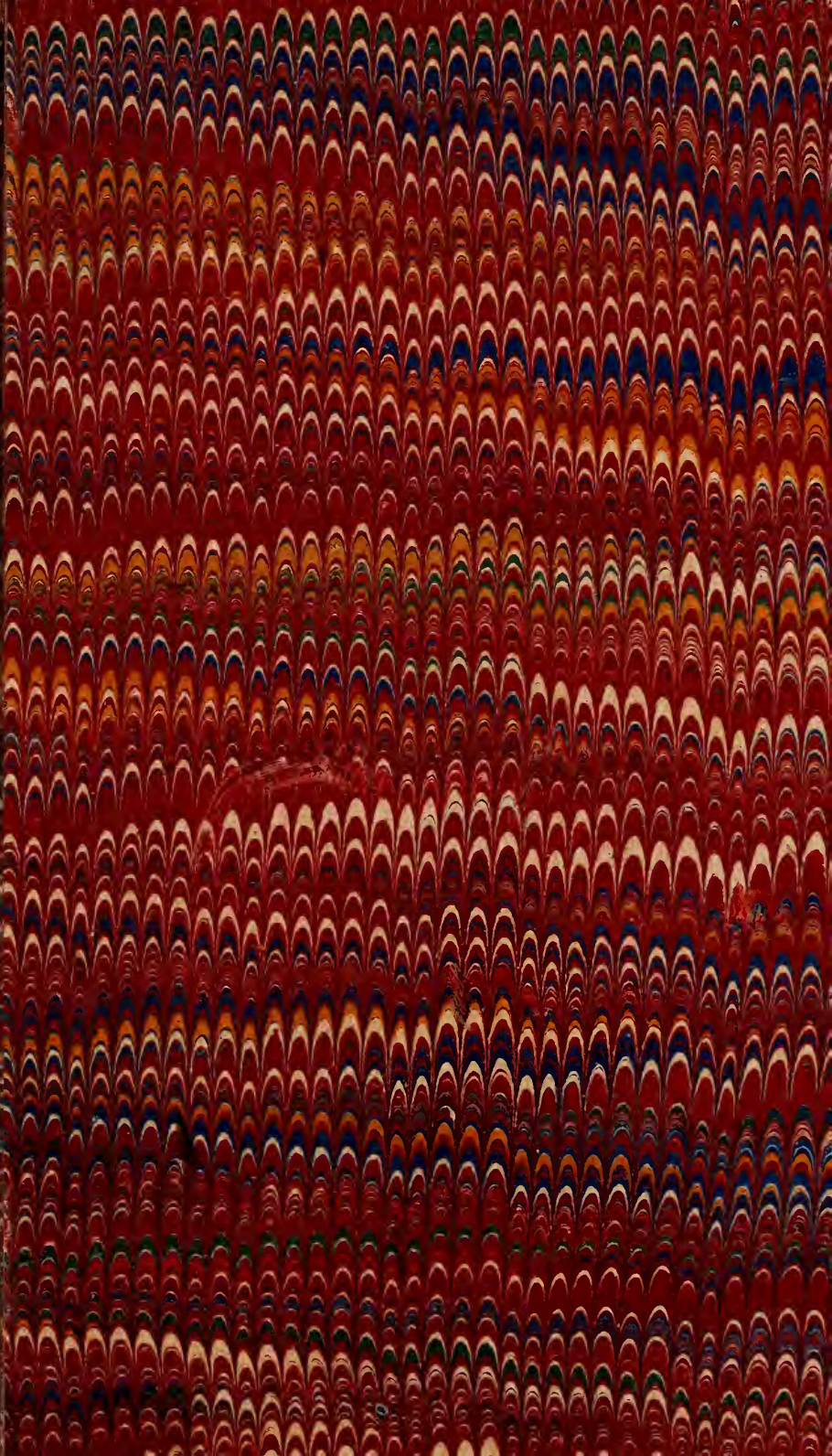












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